



Left: Jon Snow (pictured launching CTC's Safety in Numbers campaign) and Josie Dew (pictured at the 2011 CTC Birthday Rides) gave evidence to the Commons Transport Select Committee on cycle safety

Peddalling power

CTC goes to the Commons to give evidence on cycle safety and support The Times campaign. Campaigns & Policy Director **Roger Geffen** summarises

IN APRIL, CTC'S JON SNOW AND JOSIE DEW were invited by the Commons Transport Select Committee to give evidence on cycle safety, alongside Times editor James Harding, as part of an ongoing inquiry into the Government's 'Strategic framework on road safety'. I gave evidence back in January, but the committee now seems much more engaged due to The Times campaign.

James Harding, editor of the Times, said: 'I would identify the key safety things as improvements in the equipment around lorries, which we think have had a particularly lethal effect in cities, and addressing the more dangerous junctions. Those are really practical things that need to be done now.'

Jon Snow called for clear leadership from central government. He said: 'Leadership means joined up government with all departments working together to further cycling. There needs to be much more funding for cycling – perhaps £300 million a year from central government, a diminutive sum of money even in an age of austerity.'

Josie Dew explained that: 'I have ridden 500,000 miles in 50 countries and, in my experience, driver

behaviour is getting worse. Drivers should have to ride a bicycle before they get behind the wheel – the best way would be to have cycling as part of the driving test.'

Their evidence was followed immediately by evidence from transport ministers Norman Baker (LibDem) and Mike Penning (Con), whose responsibilities cover cycling and road safety respectively. They acknowledged the benefits of encouraging more and safer cycling. But they created confusion by quoting statistics purporting to show that cycling in Britain is safer than in the Netherlands because there were more cyclists killed there per head of population. CTC wrote to them afterwards to point out that the Dutch cycled 12 times as far per capita, and that per mile cycling in Britain is at least twice as risky.

10,000 JUNCTIONS

That same morning, The Times unveiled an online map showing the 10,000 nominations submitted by cyclists for junctions where cycle safety improvements are most needed. The Times manifesto had originally called for action to improve 'the most dangerous junctions', but

CTC suggested that locations with high casualty numbers could indicate high cycle use more than poor cycle safety; cyclists might avoid the most dangerous junctions entirely.

The Elephant and Castle topped the league. I was among the many individuals who had nominated it. While I do cycle around it, I recognise that it is a massive barrier to many cyclists and potential cyclists between most of south or southeast London and the central London bridges.

MORE AND SAFER CYCLING

The next day, The Times' reports of the evidence were accompanied by a letter to the editor, drafted by CTC but co-signed by the chief executives of the Bicycle Association, British Cycling, Cyclenation and Sustrans, as well as CTC's Gordon Seabright.

It echoed Jon Snow's appeal for government leadership, calling for high-level ministerial support for an action plan to give a huge boost to cycle use and safety for cyclists. The letter said: 'We seek commitment from the highest levels of government to deliver a transformational increase in cycle use, and to secure the cross-departmental, cross-party and cross-organisational backing for the sustained investment this will require.' It stressed the need to improve cycling conditions and promote cycling.

Together with Jason Torrance – my counterpart at Sustrans – I have been working to outline an action plan on behalf of Norman Baker's recently established Cycling Stakeholder Forum. This has now been submitted to Transport Secretary Justine Greening, and I hope to report her response in the next issue.

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The Elephant and Castle in London topped the league of dangerous junctions